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FOR THE AMERICAN MUSIC LOVER



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# The American RECORD GUIDE

May, 1946 ▲ Vol. XII, No. 9

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May, 1946

## Editorial Notes

The article, *The Listener and High Fidelity*, published in our March issue, has provoked some comments by our readers. Since more information on this subject has been requested, we have had an article prepared for us by John M. Raynor, a new technical adviser, who joins our staff this month. There is more to say on this subject and, since readers have professed considerable interest, it will be pursued in subsequent issues.

Letters continue to come in asking us for all sorts of technical advice. Now technical problems cannot always be satisfactorily solved by letter writing. Moreover, there is a time element involved in answering correspondence which cannot be met by us or our technical advisers. No two problems out of a hundred may be due to the same cause. Most technicians feel they would rather offer no advice than to give conjectural counsel which may prove misleading or worthless. We have shown in recent issues how the best needles on most equipment can be the worst on some equipment.

People ask us how to build a good reproducing unit at a moderate price. This cannot be satisfactorily accomplished. Constructing a phonograph at home, without laboratory equipment to check on distortion, is almost a futile business.

In a recent well-timed article, *On New and Old Equipment* (January 1946), Mr. Lanier gave the soundest advice that anyone could get regarding equipment today. Recondition your old equipment and ten chances to one you will have a better machine than you can buy today at its original price. In an over-zealous moment, Mr. Lanier stated he

would be happy to answer inquiries. But this he was unable to do as his everyday work did not permit the extra time required. Further, an assignment to cover the atomic bomb tests in the Pacific complicated matters for him before he left.

There is no one for whom we have a deeper sympathy than the fellow who, enjoying his own selection of music to the utmost, finds himself suddenly unable to get decent sounding reproduction. What he needs of course is a good service man. If this person fails him, it is natural for him to send an S.O.S. to us or someone else in the field. But though we may be sympathetic, we cannot always help. If we can offer any suggestions we do so, but our position is very much like the doctor's who hears about a symptom—not always properly described—on the telephone. Like the doctor, we or one of our technical advisers, feel the necessity of being on hand to examine thoroughly.

\* \* \*

We still have to publish much later than we would like to. The point is that we wait for review material much later than do most, because in the past readers have informed us they would rather have the publication late with as much review material as possible than have it earlier with only a few items of that month. There is another reason for lateness in publication which remains beyond our control. It pertains to the paper situation. Last month we aimed to mail on the sixteenth, but the paper mills failed to get our supply to us in time. It so happened that we shot ahead 97 per cent in March over the subscriptions of the previous year, with the result that we used up more paper than we had scheduled. Having to await our paper shipment delayed us a whole week. This month we had to wait for review material which was more than a week late and many of the May releases arrived too late for inclusion in this issue.

\* \* \*

¶ Stephen Fassett has been missing from the pages of this journal for two months. This was due to an extensive removal made by the Fassett family.

## Tovey's "Beethoven"

### A Book Review

BEETHOVEN, by Sir Donald Francis Tovey; Oxford University Press, 1945. 138 p.p. Price \$3.00.

▲Tovey's studies of Beethoven's music scattered through his *Essays in Musical Analysis*, the edition of the *Pianoforte Sonatas* and their analytical *Companion*, and the monumental critique of the *Ninth Symphony* are now brought together by a summary commentary, fragmentary though it be, in this book. From its eminence we can appreciate how great Beethoven looms—not only in Tovey's music-world, but in ours as well. Focusing upon Beethoven's mastery of sonata-idiom as the meeting ground in instrumental music of the lyric and dramatic, Tovey has defined Beethoven's critically central position in our musical epoch, and, like his essays on Beethoven's individual compositions, this book is an incessant recognition of the imagination, invention, and intensity of one of the greatest of all creative artists. The true impact of that genius can be experienced only through the art itself, but Tovey's is a uniquely fruitful guide toward an enrichment of that experience.

Reading Tovey's new book, I was reminded of J. W. N. Sullivan's masterful study of Beethoven and his "spiritual development". Sullivan's sympathetic understanding of the music itself produces creative psychological insights into the human character and genius of Beethoven. With Tovey, a penetrating intelligence views Beethoven's music on its own terms and establishes the perspective from which we may ourselves view Beethoven's genius. With both writers the primary material is the music: study of its form and technique, such as Tovey undertakes, is essential to an understanding of Beethoven as a man and as a composer. Both books avoid the common fallacy of popular "music appreciation" which seeks to explain music in terms of biographical data. To be sure, the man behind the music is often a relevant and significantly interesting study, but he should be approached

(Continued on page 236)



# JOSEPH S Z I G E T I

## ON MUSIC AND STYLE

### An Interview

Joseph Szigeti, who is the soloist in Columbia's new release of the Brahms *Violin Concerto*, has without doubt a longer history as a recording artist than any other figure on the concert stage today with the exception perhaps of Wilhelm Bachaus and Mischa Elman. In 1904, at the age of twelve, he made his debut before the recording horn. At the time, he was visiting in England with friends who were phonograph enthusiasts to such an extent that they made their own recordings. "One day I found I had the house to myself," Mr. Szigeti said. "I decided to make a record of my own. Slipping into the room where the new wax cylinders were kept, I adjusted the machine and with a stop watch on the table I played solo after solo into its paper horn."

Five years later, in 1909, when Szigeti already had a European reputation as a boy

prodigy, his first commercial recordings appeared under the His Master's Voice label. Morsels like the *Valse Triste* of Sibelius, the Rubinstein *Romanze in E flat*, (a tune by the way, that has become the basis of the popular song *There's No Other Love*), and an abridged version of the variations from Beethoven's *Kreutzer Sonata* were among his most popular first releases. These still turn up—much to Szigeti's chagrin—in the collections of record devotees. However immature the artistry may have been in some of those early records, he admits deriving an "uncanny pleasure" when a phonograph repeats to him something he had played long ago.

"I smile when I think of that first recording of the *Kreutzer Variations*," he told us. "It brings to mind the time I played in public my first Beethoven sonata. It was the *C Minor, Opus 30, No. 2*. This was on a

concert tour in Scotland, and my partner was the lovely Myra Hess. What a precious recollection! She was then, although still in her 'teens and barely a few years my senior, a gracious, mellow artist. Yes, mellow in her already poised musicianship that belied her age."

With the advent of electrical recording in 1926, Szigeti, though still in his early thirties, was a veteran on records, and in the ensuing twenty years he has achieved one triumph after another. His performances of the Brahms concerto (made in 1929) and the Beethoven concerto (made in the early thirties) have long been preferred by music lovers and critics for their nobility of utterance and grandeur of style, despite the excellence of other more modern and better recorded performances. And Szigeti's rendition of the popular Mendelssohn concerto (Columbia set 190) holds similar power over listeners. How ideally suited to each other seem the violinist and Sir Thomas Beecham in their playing of this score, which is more often than not treated to an over-lush or a too superficially brilliant performance. Szigeti achieves the requisite élan and just the right amount of tonal suavity, and Beecham is completely *en rapport* in his orchestral direction.

#### An Unrivaled Set

Perhaps one of the most outstanding examples of consummate teamwork is to be found in the Szigeti-Beecham performance of the *Violin Concerto No. 1* of Prokofieff (Columbia set 244). It is a performance to which the adjective "definitive" can well be applied. Carl Flesch in his book, *The Art of Violin Playing*, has written that "future generations will identify the Prokofieff concerto with Szigeti's performance as a criterion for all others".

As fine as Szigeti's earlier rendition of the Brahms concerto is, he regards his latest set as a better one. "It is not just a matter of reproduction," he says, "but a matter of interpretation also. I have played over my older version side by side with the newer one. In the recording with Ormandy I find a maturity of artistic purpose and a realization in execution that has satisfied me I have done a better job. And high tributes must be given to the superb Philadelphia Orchestra and to Ormandy's uncanny gift of identi-

fying himself with his soloist's style and conception." On the face of this, surely Columbia should make every effort to re-record the violinist's performance of the Beethoven concerto at an early date.

#### An Admired Style

Szigeti's distinctive individuality of style accounts in a large measure for his popularity among discriminating listeners. His musical perceptions are eclectic, and the style he has evolved through the years permits him successfully to exploit the classical, the romantic or the modern school. Although of Hungarian birth and schooling, his playing today cannot be called Hungarian: it is the expression of an artist whose viewpoints on art and life are universal. "I have aimed from my earliest manhood," he told us, "to avoid being objectionably national."

The American concert stage has for many years been flooded with soloists espousing the Russian school, and more especially the Leopold Auer school, of violin technique. These artists concentrate on producing a luscious, full tone from the violin: often a type of musical treacle which, to many of us, is both cloying and dull. It has been said that the Auer technique is ideally suited to compositions of the romantic writers and certainly some of his best pupils shine in works like the Tchaikovsky concerto.

Szigeti stands at an opposite pole from the Auer pupils. Tone with him is not a major consideration, yet he can be as sensitive and suave as any when the music asks for this sort of treatment. His performance of the Mozart *Sonata in E minor, K. 304* (Columbia disc 69005-D) bears this out, as does his recording of the Mozart *Concerto in D, K. 218*, again in the ideal company of Beecham (Columbia set 224). And who can ask for a more exquisitely fine-toned rendition of Szymanowski's *The Fountain of Arethusa* (Columbia disc 7304-M) than he gives? Lushness is out of place in music of this kind.

More important with Szigeti than mere production of tone are those qualities included in the term "musicianship": phrasing, accentuation, balance, élan—to name a few. The taut, aristocratic style of playing—often deceptively straightforward—that he applies makes it clear to the listener that he considers music more in terms of a com-



position than a mere vehicle. But since he does not bend over backwards to produce a mellifluous tone, it has been unjustly said that, purely from the standpoint of ear appeal, he is inferior to the famous Auer pupils. Szigeti's admirers usually meet this objection by pointing to his consummate musicianship. But we feel it can be met on its own grounds by taking a long term view of the matter. For, however captivating the super-charged, ravishing tone of the Russian school may be at first hearing, its wearing qualities are distinctly limited. Szigeti's tone, by its very avoidance of merely sensuous appeal, always remains fresh.

The other day, while lunching with Szigeti, we asked him if his distinctive violin style could be traced to the efforts of his teacher, Jenő Hubay. The answer was a resounding "No!"

#### Teacher and Pupil

"In spite of all that I owe to Hubay and to his undoubtedly outstanding pedagogic skill," Szigeti said, "I must admit that he tended to dominate his pupils. He created a somewhat restrictive and negative attitude within them. Moreover, his musical outlook was naturally conditioned by the questionable virtuoso taste of the 1880's and 1890's which were the decades of his triumphs on the concert stage. As he lacked the exploring pioneering urge of, say, a Busoni, his teaching had a regrettably conservative, not to say reactionary, tendency and left little room for a teen-age pupil's self-assertion. (We were mostly teen-agers in the Hubay class.) To Hubay, such composers as Vieuxtemps, Wieniawski, Sarasate, Godard, Saint-Saëns, Massenet were demi-gods. He spurned the modern trend."

But in all fairness to Hubay we might observe that his famous contemporary, Leopold Auer, held views of a similarly limited nature. Thus in Auer's *Violin Playing As I Teach It* (Fred. A. Stokes, 1921), the following appears: "With regard to J. S. Bach's two Concertos for Violin, I have never given them to my pupils to study because, from my point of view, only the two slow movements in them are musically valuable and really worthy of their composer; while the first and last movements of each Concerto are not very interesting, either musically or technically."

But to continue with Mr. Szigeti's reminiscences. "After I left Hubay and started on my own, I began truly to develop," he said. "Of course, I had help and honest criticism from the outside. Ysaye became a close friend of mine and I cherish to this day the few acoustic recordings that he made, but still more do I cherish memories of his incomparably 'creative' playing. Busoni, also, was a great influence in setting me on the right path. His forward-looking musical temperament and amazing intellectual approach have always been an inspiration. Through the performance of his *Violin Concerto* and through tours in England, I became closely associated with him. In fact Busoni appeared in public for the last time at a performance I gave in Berlin of his unjustly neglected *Violin Concerto*." Szigeti would like to record the Busoni concerto, which he contends has an aristocracy of musical purpose mated to a romantic feeling and a genuine virtuoso sweep.

The avid interest in recording evidenced by Szigeti is unusual, and if one looks over his list of discs one is struck by the fact that they represent a high standard of musical taste. He has usually shunned making records of strictly popular works.

#### The Universal Artist

Mr. Szigeti has always avoided being "objectionably national". His approach to the violin can be said to represent a midway point between the super-refined, detached French style and the sensuous, effusive Russian style. No one is so well equipped to play the universal Bach, or the classic, super-national music of Mozart. Szigeti's performances of the unaccompanied sonatas of Bach in *G minor* and *A minor* (Columbia sets X-1 and X-2) are rare musical experiences, salient examples of how unaccompanied music of this kind can be made appealing. They rank with Casals' superlative performances of the unaccompanied cello suites. Szigeti should be permitted to do others—especially the *D minor Sonata*, or *Partita*, which contains the celebrated Chaconne. The Szigeti-Flesch rendition of the *Double Violin Concerto in D minor* (Columbia set X-90), despite other better reproduced recordings, has not been displaced for many listeners. The absorption on the part of the two violinists in the music itself and their

avoidance of a conflict for preëminence yields a rare musical experience, especially in the wonderful slow movement.

It is regrettable that Szigeti has not recorded more of his splendid Mozart performances, which in the concert hall have long been cause for praise from critics and music lovers alike. Just one concerto and one violin sonata! Given a pianistic partner of the stylistic sensibility of a Mieczyslaw Horszowski (with whom Szigeti is scheduled to do some recordings), a series of Mozart sonatas by Szigeti could not fail to prove an artistic and a commercial success. (Horszowski, by the way, has proved his mettle in those memorable recordings with Casals of Beethoven's cello sonatas.)

#### A Brahms' Sonata

One can hardly pass by Szigeti's recordings without speaking of the Brahms *Sonata in D minor, Opus 108* (Columbia set 324) that he made with Egon Petri. Here is a rare artistic compatibility, playing that accords with the true ideal of chamber music—equal partnership. Petri was a pupil of the renowned Busoni, Szigeti a friendly disciple. Their performance brings an universality of expression to one of Brahms' greatest chamber works. It is preferable, in our way of thinking, to the rendition of Kochanski and Rubinstein, where the style often borders dangerously close to nationalism.

No one has been more instrumental than Szigeti in bringing seldom played music to the attention of the public. We can thank him for the excellent and sympathetic performance of the Bloch *Violin Concerto* (Columbia set 380) and for his understanding work in the Bartok *Contrasts* (Columbia set X-178), in which three unusual musical personalities are linked—Bartok (piano), Benny Goodman (clarinet), and Szigeti (violin). The composition owes its existence to Szigeti's idea (in suggesting that Benny Goodman commission such a work) and to his role as a go-between with the composer and Mr. Goodman.

Szigeti views with alarm the growing ten-

unfortunate that pupils today are so often and so obviously working for prizes and not for an all-around development. "In concert after concert, one is subjected," he says, "to dency of young artists to specialize exclusively in war-horses. He also thinks it the same Chopin etudes, the same Beethoven sonatas, the same hackneyed violin concertos. The result of this is the concert-goer seldom hears anything but a repetition of old display pieces. This is why the record enthusiast is such a potent leaven in the texture of our musical society. He can escape from the somewhat monotonous atmosphere of the concert hall and become an adventurous musical explorer. No longer need he be a slave to the tyranny of pedestrian concert performances and repetitious musical fare. Moreover, he can seek the counsel of record critics. The competent record reviewer, whom I regard as an important factor in the world of music today, has a wide range to cover, and he must know music and consider values that are enduring."

#### Future Recordings

Record collectors can rest assured that Mr. Szigeti, now at the height of his powers, will continue to open up new avenues of musical experience, thus giving them additional cause to rejoice that his distinguished artistry is perpetuated. The true artist grows, he states, until his executive powers are cut off by some physical disability or by an illness as in the case of his friend, Ysaye. "Can there be a greater *titre de gloire* for a virtuoso," asks Szigeti, "than the fact that Ysaye inspired such masterpieces as the Cesar Franck *Violin Sonata*, the Chausson *Poème* and the *String Quartet* by Debussy? All of these were composed with Ysaye 'in mind' and first performed by him. What a glorious 'balance sheet' that is. . . ."

"Your fate is your own working," Mr. Szigeti contends, "and, as in the case of the hen and the egg, one does not know what comes first. You provoke fate to lead you on, and either progress or retrogress."





# FALSE HIGH FIDELITY

JOHN M. RAYNOR

*A technician tells us some of the reasons why people dislike high fidelity.*

The term "high fidelity", in the minds of many listeners, is synonymous with "screech". It is a pity that the term "high fidelity", along with its synonym "wide range", has been shamefully abused and misadvertised—they have both been tacked on to radios and phonographs producing every imaginable type of sound. It is true that in a few cases the terms have been correctly used, for high fidelity equipment does exist; but in the majority of cases the terms have been misapplied. When the average listener's ears have been conditioned and re-conditioned, so to speak, to pseudo high-fidelity reproduction, it is not surprising to find that he turns up his nose at the real thing when it comes along. The result may be his return to some radio or phonograph that has a poor frequency response (i.e. a set with poor high frequency reproduction and an unnaturally "boomy" bass) along with accompanying evils.

As I have already said, high-fidelity equipment *does* exist. Such equipment is expensive, however, because high standards must be maintained throughout in manufacturing. It is only in this way that the full benefits of wide-range reproduction are to be realized.

The old saying that the chain is no stronger than its weakest link certainly holds true for such equipment. Every component part of a high-fidelity outfit has to be of the best available material, and matching of the parts is of the utmost importance to assure what is recognized as the very minimum of distortion.

There are excellent grounds for the complaint that so-called high-fidelity equipment screeches. The human ear has the particular characteristic of being more sensitive to low frequencies at high volume than at low volume. The reader can make an interesting test to prove this point. Preferably a floor model radio or phonograph should be used so that the bass will be good. Adjust the volume and the tone controls so that a full room volume is obtained and the quality is as bright as possible. One does not have to be too conscientious with the "full room volume"—neighbors do exist, you know.

Now, without touching the tone controls, turn down the volume and notice if the bass disappears with respect to the highs or treble. If the bass does disappear, the quality will tend to be brittle and possibly screechy. If the bass, on the other hand, seems to stay in

the same proportion to the treble, consider yourself fortunate, for undoubtedly your instrument has a compensated volume control. That is, the control not only varies the volume of the reproduction, but it also boosts the bass as the volume is decreased, thus giving the illusion of an equal bass for an equal treble at all settings of the volume control.

The lack of a compensated volume control in an instrument which may be operated in a small room, explains why the quality of the instrument may be brittle and why it may seem to have an unlimited supply of high frequencies. An instrument in a small room must, of necessity, be operated at a low volume. Obviously, if the volume control is not compensated the listener must either resort to attenuating (i.e. turning down or lessening) the treble, if his instrument has the requisite control to permit him to do this, or just suffer.

#### Poor Pickups

Another type of screeching quality has its origin in phonographs where the amplifier is good but the pickup is not. A great many commercial pickups in general use tend to have a quite noticeable resonance between 4000 and 6000 cycles per second. Here again another idiosyncrasy of the human ear enters. The ear tends to be more sensitive to "peaks" (a tone that is too loud in relation to its neighbors) in the higher frequencies. Consequently a pickup with such peaks not only makes the treble over-brilliant, but also accentuates scratch within the frequencies of the peak. It is all very well to limit the frequency response of a system because of record scratch, but such a move is more often than not defeated by using a pickup which has peaks within the frequency range. A secondary effect of the presence of a peak is that it tends to give the scratch some semblance of pitch, which makes it more irritating than is scratch that is more evenly distributed over the range of the pickup.

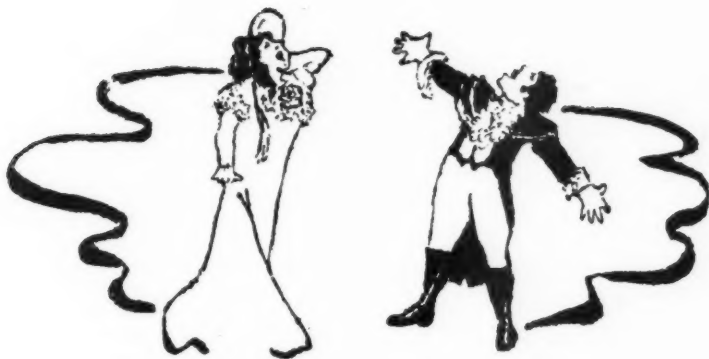
Still another source of over-brilliant quality can occur with instruments that have wide tonal range switches on them for extending the response of the phonograph unit, but with no means of controlling the high frequencies in the wide-range position. With ordinary records no trouble may be encountered. But suppose a recording appears

which, unbeknown to the listener, has a rising characteristic on the high end—that is, the high frequencies have been boosted in volume as the frequency increases in order to brighten the upper end of the reproduction on the ordinary low-frequency instruments. Such recordings when used with proper reproducing equipment have very low surface noise because the high frequencies must be lessened in the same way that the highs were boosted in the original recording. If this is done, little surface noise is reproduced. With such a recording on a wide-range machine, having no control over the high frequencies, the listener will probably be driven from the room. The narrow range switch does not make the reproduction complimentary to the increased highs of the original record. Incidentally, recordings with rising characteristics do exist, but how always to identify these is another matter, for the frequency characteristics of commercial recordings are trade secrets. Moreover, companies have been known to make experiments in this sort of thing, which may account for one recording of a given company reproducing better than another on your own equipment. Records of this kind have been made by Decca, Musicraft and Capitol; most of their popular discs are cut with rising characteristics. This method of recording helps disguise inferior material.

#### Intermodulation Distortion

There is another troublemaker, having the awesome sounding title of "intermodulation distortion". This type of distortion has been known for some time but only recently has it been seriously considered. Let me explain the nature of this condition. Take a well designed high-fidelity amplifier which, to the best knowledge, is linear—that is the amplifier in no way distorts a signal being put through it. Two frequencies, 400 and 1000 c.p.s., are fed simultaneously through it and at its output there will be 400 and 1000 cycles, nothing more. Now suppose a component part of this amplifier is compromised—say a poor output matching transformer which is non-linear has been used in its assemblance. If it is poor, it will be non-linear. If the two frequencies are fed through this type of amplifier, there will be heard 400, 600, 1000 and 1400 cycles, instead of the

(Continued on page 274)



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## PERSONAL PREFERENCES

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By D. L. Julian

*All people, whether music lovers, critics or otherwise, have their personal preferences among their recordings and we feel sure others would like to hear about them. With this premise in mind we have asked some former writers in this journal, as well as a group of record critics across country, to tell our readers about their favorite recordings. Mr. D. L. Julian begins the series. He will be remembered by many readers for his article on needles in the May 1945 issue as well as for other papers on technical matters.—Ed.*

Of what qualities are "favorite" recordings compounded? To think about it is to wonder in what degree human and technical ingredients need be blended to create an exalted and enduring personal experience.

Recorded literature is not so vast but that everyone may experience, even upon a superficial survey, the exaltation of discovery. Some recordings will definitely tower majestically above the commonplace, like the pinnacles of New York skyscrapers piercing an earth-bound fog.

My favorites, just as my standards of judgment, will vary from those of other listeners. The phonograph as a medium of expression is brutally frank, and it permits ruthless appraisal. This degree of objectivity cannot be duplicated in the concert hall, where distractions, both overt and

subtle, are always at work. A recorded performance allows no confusion of what-we-hear with what-we-see: no "pretty face" to woo attention from second-rate musicianship or shoddy craftsmanship. Therefore, what seems to be good and real in a "personal appearance" might prove unacceptable and counterfeit, if put on records.

In advancing the recordings of my choice, the selection is made on the basis of the artist rather than the composer. It is, for me, the weightier consideration, since I look upon a record collection as a gallery displaying the work of executants. Undoubtedly this is not the most widely accepted attitude, with its inference that the composer is a tool in the interpreter's hand; but when a musical statement is expounded with such finality and authority as to fathom the deepest

springs of human emotion, I accord the highest honor to the interpretive artist. I am more impressed by a sublime performance of Meyerbeer than by a wooden interpretation of first-rate Wagner.

It follows, then, that the recordings I submit will not represent a cross-section of my musical taste. Beethoven and Mozart, alas, will be found missing. Moreover, the dozen submitted cannot be regarded as an all-inclusive list of my personal preferences, but rather a portion of them—that portion which came to mind most readily.

Humperdinck: *Hansel and Gretel—Overture*; The B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Sir Adrian Boult. Victor disc 11929.

I begin with this overture because to me it is an ageless expression of art. There is both nobility and simplicity in this music; it belongs to a world of innocence and absolute faith, where men do not make wars. The performance by Boult is appropriately tender and rhythmically alive. Though the recording dates back to 1932, it can stand favorably next to many more recent offerings.

Wagner: *Goetterdaemmerung—Siegfried's Death Music*; The Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Wilhelm Furtwaengler. Polydor disc 67054.

The unwavering dramatic fervor of this Wagnerian passage remains a supreme musical experience with me. I do not think of this music as a dirge, but rather as the resolution of elements of death and life in a heroic expression that is extremely moving. Furtwaengler's reading of this scene, in my way of thinking, is a phonographic triumph. Polydor issued it in 1933, the same year that Hitler came into power. The recording calls forth superlatives; it is monumental, revealing every voice of a great orchestra. Furtwaengler (blast his Nazi associations!) is surely in top form.

Tchaikovsky: *Romeo and Juliet—Fantasy Overture*; The Boston Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Serge Koussevitzky. Victor set 347.

The mills of Tin Pan Alley, which in a recent season ground out so many versions both good and bad of this tone poem, may

have spoiled it forever for some listeners. One wonders, are the "autopsies on Tchaikovsky" a signpost of a musically maturing generation?

Tchaikovsky sweeps quite a gamut of aural description in a few pages that never either bogs down into a cloying sentiment nor becomes inanely clever. The Bostonians give a glowing account of the music, and the recording (made in 1936) is a fine example of really good domestic reproduction.

Liszt (arr. Mueller): *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2*; The Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Herman Abendroth. English Parlophone disc E-11389.

There are those who believe that Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra have had the "last word" on this overworked war horse. To them, I would like to recommend this disc, which is—I understand—still available from England. Abendroth injects the right amount of "frenzy", without degrading his performance with the slick inanities that others tend to apply, and the famed Berlin orchestra plays with fine unanimity.

The clarity of the reproduction is a pleasure. The record was made in 1938.

Nielsen: *Moderen—Prelude to Act II and Fatherland Song*; The Royal Opera Orchestra (Copenhagen), conducted by Johann Hye-Knudsen. Danish H.M.V. disc Z-237.

Here is an introduction to one of Denmark's most honored composers, a record which, in my estimation, makes for good listening. The "Prelude" to *Moderen* I find impressive, but not pretentious. There is nothing "modern" in its texture or development, but its harmonic structure pleases me. The "Prelude" builds up to a compelling climax, achieved in a novel manner. The *Fatherland Song* reiterates the theme of the "Prelude", and is reinforced by a chorus. The Copenhagen orchestra gives a good performance, and the recording (c.1936) is outstanding. The reverse side of this disc contains a "Prelude" from *Renaissance* by Lange-Mueller which is not quite equal in musical quality.

Tchaikovsky: *Capriccio Italien* (abridged); The Dresden State Opera Orchestra, con-

ducted by Karl Boehm. English H.M.V. disc DB-4632.

The Italian holiday painted by Tchaikovsky revels in bright, sunny skies and care-free spirit—albeit with a pungent Russian flavor. This is light, picturesque music, demanding nothing from the listener but two ears in good working condition. The feature of this disc is not the quality of the music but the quality of the orchestral playing—glorious musicianly teamwork, combined with rarely realistic recording. The disc remains for me a standard by which to judge all other orchestral records.

The pre-war Dresden State Opera Orchestra boasted one of the finest horn sections in the world. Technically, this is one of a half-dozen discs which exploits fully the resources of my reproducing equipment. There is a wonderful tonal impact in the full weight, power and splendor of this virtuoso orchestra. Electrola made this disc in 1938, and I believe it is still available on import from England, as are most of the other European recordings listed below.

Mascagni: *Cavalleria Rusticana—Easter Hymn*; Emmy Bettendorf (soprano), with Chorus, Organ and Orchestra of the Berlin State Opera, conducted by Edward Moerike. English Parlophone R-20017 or domestic Decca 25826.

The magic moments of opera—when great artists are represented—never fail to leave me moved and spiritually enriched. The *Easter Hymn* from Mascagni's *Cavalleria* is filled with a simple dignity and an uncomplicated grandeur. It is a setting of peace and quiet beauty, against which the later tragedy may rise more starkly. Emmy Bettendorf, one of the great sopranos of our generation, projects a voice of tonal refinement and beauty, backed by the choir and orchestra of the Berlin Opera, to produce a memorable and eloquent phonographic experience. And Moerike is a great conductor, one who unfortunately died too early to have left as many mementos of his artistry as some of us would have liked. This disc dates back to the dawn of the electrical process (1926), but the technical details were excellently contrived for its time.

Donizetti: *Lucia di Lammermoor—Tomb Scene*; Beniamino Gigli (tenor) and Ezio

Pinza (basso), with Chorus and Orchestra of the Metropolitan Opera. Victor disc 8096.

There are many writers on musical matters who would have us dismiss the works of Donizetti as unworthy of serious consideration. So long as sterling singers can realize the composer's intentions, he will have an honored position for me. In the best Italian manner, two great male voices of any age can bring to life the plangent outpourings at the conclusion to *Lucia*. This record is one of a distinguished group made by Victor in 1929. Gigli's warm, velvet tones are a delight, and Pinza lends outstanding assistance. The recording is excellent. It belongs among a famous series of operatic discs of which Victor can be justly proud.

Puccini: *La Tosca—Ah quegli occhi*, and *Amaro sol per te*; Lotte Lehmann (soprano) and Jan Kiepura (tenor), with Berlin State Opera Orchestra, conducted by Manfred Gurlitt. Odeon disc 8743 or domestic Decca 29016.

This is a souvenir of the artists in their prime. The year is 1927, and the place the Staatsoper, Berlin. Kiepura has just made his opera debut the previous year at Vienna. Hailed the second Caruso, he has become a sensation overnight. Lehmann has already established herself as one of the brightest stars in the operatic firmament. It is, as far as I know, the only memento of her operatic artistry to be heard employing the Italian language. To my way of thinking, the singing here is inspired. Kiepura's voice, despite some faults in tone quality and intonation which several critics have noted, is truly thrilling to me. His singing offered a promise in this record never fulfilled, as his recent Columbia records bear out. The youthful exuberance and fervor of Lehmann's singing recalls a most gratifying period of her career.

Verdi: *Rigoletto—E il sol dell'anima*, and Donizetti: *Dan Pasquale—Tornami a dir*; Amelita Galli-Curci (soprano) and Tito Schipa (tenor). Victor disc 1755.

Here are examples of rather undistinguished music that are made rare experiences by interpretive sympathy and vocal beauty. Galli-Curci and Schipa have always recorded uncommonly well, but here they reach a

(Continued on page 275)

## Book Review

(Continued from page 246)  
through his most characteristic and important achievement—his artistic creation. The proper critical relation between a composer's life and his music is, therefore, what the music tells us about the man, rather than what the man may tell us about the music.

Tovey's book on Beethoven was neither revised nor finished by its author. Sir Hubert Foss and Dr. Ernest Walker, the editors of the edition, have treated the posthumous text with respect and care, and added only musical examples where needed. Considering the comprehensiveness of the text, I believe that Tovey had nearly finished the book: its central core, the discussion of Beethoven's sonata-form, is complete, and I suspect that the completion of the chapter on Fugue and a summary conclusion are all that are lacking. In this penetrating study of Beethoven as a dramatic composer and, as such, the consummate master of sonata-form, Tovey deals fully with what he has always implied was the basis of this composer's art. Nowhere else does Tovey so succinctly and thoroughly expound his conception of sonata-form as the dramatic idiom of instrumental music. The major portion of this slender volume is devoted to an examination of the "two great principles" of Beethoven's use of the sonata-form: "that the sonata style is inveterately dramatic"; and "that sonata form and style arise just at the breaking point between lyric melody and dramatic music". Tovey explores the implications of these principles in terms of Beethoven's harmony and tonality, rhythm and movement, phrasing and accent, development, and such allied forms as the rondo, variations, and fugue.

The second respect in which Tovey's *Beethoven* is incomplete is characteristic of the best criticism. The reader who expects to gain from Tovey immediate "understanding" of Beethoven will be sorely disappointed, for Tovey is not a facile popularist who can glibly explain music for the lazy listener. The reader of this book is best served if he is left with a sense of dissatisfaction—a hunger that can be appeased only by turning to the music itself and hearing in it a confirmation of Tovey's insights. Criti-

cism of music involves the communication of the critic's experience of the music in non-musical terms and, like all who achieve this with accuracy and relevance to the music, Tovey has been charged with being "too technical". There is no easy high-road to the experience of any art: the listener must bring to a great masterpiece an actively intelligent attention worthy of the energy and talent expended in creating it. Tovey's study of Beethoven's music can be no more than a guide to its terrain: like a map, it is neither a substitute for the scenery en route, nor a magic carpet to bear us without effort to our destination.

There is still another respect in which this book is incomplete. Here, as elsewhere, Tovey avoids attempting a comprehensive study of every facet of Beethoven's music. For an elaboration of Tovey's concise generalizations, the reader will do well to turn to his individual essays on Beethoven's compositions. For instance, the material on variations should be supplemented with such *Essays* as those on the *Eroica Symphony*, the *Prometheus Variations*, the *Diabelli Variations*, and analyses in the *Companion* to the piano sonatas. It would have been a valuable service had the editors posted references to the relevant *Essays* in footnotes to the present text.

There remain two major Beethoven studies by Tovey that are yet to be published in readily accessible form: the article on Beethoven in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, and *Some Aspects of Beethoven's Art Forms* in the centennial issue of *Music and Letters* in 1927. The first is as concise and stimulating a brief introduction to Beethoven as I have ever encountered. The second contains an amazingly brilliant and original discussion of the "normality" of Beethoven's forms, illustrated by a comparative analysis of the *Opus 22 Piano Sonata* and the *Opus 131 String Quartet*. Finally, in his *Essays* on the "Dungeon Scene" from *Fidelio* and the second and third *Leonore Overtures*, Tovey mentions a projected study of the opera *Fidelio* and an analysis of Beethoven's revisions of it. If this material were ever assembled, its publication would be of exceptional importance both to Tovey's disciples and to students of Beethoven.

—Phil Hart





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## A SURVEY OF CHAMBER MUSIC

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By Peter Hugh Reed

*The following copy was unfortunately omitted in the make-up of the magazine last month, and a number of readers have asked what happened to the balance of our survey of the Opus 76 quartets. The copy below belongs on page 219 just before our discussion of the quartets that form Opus 77. The opening paragraph deals with the recordings of the Emperor Quartet, Opus 76, No. 3.*

\* \* \*

One can claim that the second movement has become hackneyed, but one can hardly say that Haydn's imaginative harmonic and polyphonic treatment remains unimpressive in a good performance. Of the several recordings of this work, the Pro Arte is preferable for its fine recording; the Lener Quartet plays the famous air and variations with greater finish but the reproduction in this set (Columbia 246) is not as good.

The *B flat major Quartet, Opus 76, No. 4*, known as *The Sunrise* from the sustained character of its opening movement, is a wholly beautiful opus. The richness of the

writing, particularly of the inner parts, is noticeable from the very opening, and the wide range of expression proclaims the mature artist. There have been three recordings of this work: by the Prisca Quartet (Polydor 10631/33), the International Quartet (National Gramophonic Society 109/11), and the Pro Arte Quartet. The first I do not admire; the second, a fine rendition, is poorly recorded; the last deserves to be known, since it is one of the Pro Arte's best performances—one in which the players dig into the music and fully realize and exploit its vitality and breadth.

The slow movement (Largo) of the *D major Quartet, No. 5* would have been as widely and as deeply revered as the so-called *Largo* of Handel and the Bach piece known as the *Air for the G string* had it been written for a more democratic ensemble than the string quartet. It has been called *Benedictus* music, and regarded as a fitting subject for a mass. I am not sure that I agree with those who profess to find spiritual awe in this music, but I would be inclined to accept its religious implications; this *Largo* is warmly human music—music of an ineffable beauty at times but always human. Tovey claims nothing Haydn ever wrote was "more roman-

tically youthful". The ingratiating melody of the opening movement has been compared to the *Creation* aria—*With Verdure clad*. The inspiration of Mozart has been observed in the opening, but the discerning listener may have noted this in previous quartets and in almost all of *Opus 76*. This opus was a great favorite of the Flonzaleys, and Tovey suspects it was a great favorite of Franz Kneisel, "for at his funeral it was played by four of his pupils". The Minuet curiously begins with the same four notes of the Largo, but in a different key, and there are other touches which the eye perceives that show Haydn's resourceful manner of finding new inspiration in material at hand. The final Presto is bucolic music; the main theme has been likened to a gay shepherd's pipe. How often Haydn seems to express his joy in simple, vibrant life, and to convey a smile which he caught from the fertile countryside within his view. The Lener Quartet have recorded this work (Columbia set 125); while it is an appreciable performance, there is room for another—here again, I feel the Budapests should be called upon to provide us with an up-to-date set.

#### The Changeling

The *E flat major Quartet, No. 6* has been called the changeling of the group. It is less liked by players, and for this reason not performed often. One cannot refrain from quoting the often delightfully facetious Tovey, who says its "graceful ingenuities roll away like the process of peeling an onion". The Trio of the Minuet is undeniably the most beautiful part of the quartet; it owns a celestial quality. The first and second movements of this work seem to be strophic in character, the latter, a Fantasia, lacking true spontaneity. There is a nature mood to this music; the opening movement conveys an impression of a changing scene, light and shadows and perhaps the play of clouds. It takes fine playing to keep the first movement from seeming jerky upon occasion. The Fantasia has a pensive quality about it, and in some ways a quasi-religious mood. One is not apt soon to forget the Minuet. The finale suggests that Haydn had visualized a group of Pucks dancing on the greensward; it is elfin in character but lacking in the type of volatility which Mendelssohn was later to achieve. Amateur players will find the last

two movements particularly grateful to perform; the opening movements, on the other hand, are not easy and hence less gratifying. The only recorded performance of this work is one made by the International Quartet in the fall of 1929 (National Gramophonic Society discs 140/42). It is an admirable one, and the reproduction remains quite satisfactory despite its age.

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#### Book Review

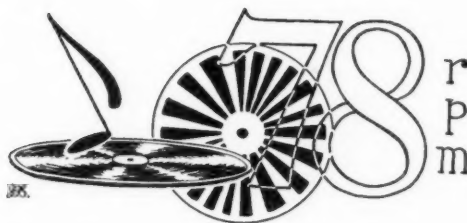
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MUSIC FOR YOUR HEALTH. By Dr. Edward Podolsky. B. Ackerman. Price \$2.00.

▲ It seems strange that Dr. Podolsky has written a book in his first three pages, but, in a sense, this is precisely what he has done. For in his foreword he has summed up what he spends 120 pages on in the book. In the foreword, the doctor has given the gist of his message to the supposedly music-starved people: by listening to music, the Greeks (and others) conquered all, the dreamless may sleep, the ill shall feel no pain, and you can play a better game of tennis. For the rest of the time, the balance of the book, Dr. Podolsky has seen fit to prove these things by quoting examples. A sympathetic reader may enjoy scanning these pages for whatever comfort is to be derived from situations comparable to his own individual predicament. The student of psychiatry may be interested in certain tests mentioned which are along the lines of mental healing. One of the most exhaustive of these was given in a well known university in 1918, and is described with a set of charts, cardiograms, and the music selections included. Reactions of both musically inclined persons, and of those thought to be otherwise, were tried with such items as Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique Symphony*, the *Toreador Song* from *Carmen*, the National Anthem and a march by Bagley. We note there was no great variation of response, which only goes to prove that it is a difficult thing to determine just who is, and who is not, musical.

It is all very confusing to your reviewer to find that one man's balm for sleeplessness is Schumann's *Traumerei*, and that an unnamed doctor "carries with him a small music box which plays Mendelssohn's Spring

—(Continued on page 276)



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## RECORD NOTES AND R E V I E W S

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*It is the purpose of this department to review monthly all worthwhile recordings. If at any time we happen to omit a record in which the reader is particularly interested, we shall be glad to give our opinion of the recording on written request. Correspondents are requested to enclose self-addressed stamped envelopes.*

*We believe that record buyers would do well to order by title rather than by number such items as they may wish to purchase. Numbers are sometimes printed incorrectly in our sources.*

*All prices given are without tax.*

A number of the releases for this month were not received at the time of going to press. As it was we held up publication to facilitate the review of many recordings for May.

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### Orchestra

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**DVORAK:** *Symphony in E minor (From the New World)*; played by the Philadelphia Orchestra, direction of Eugene Ormandy. Columbia set M or MM-570, five discs, price \$5.85.

▲ The Philadelphia Orchestra is off on a spring tour. One of its featured works will be this symphony, hence a special release of the present recording which reached us just in time to be dealt with in this issue. A

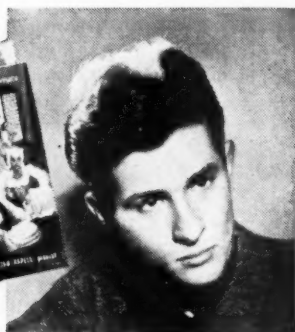
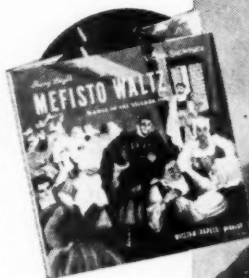
single hearing of this set substantiates its superiority over previous ones in the qualitative playing of the orchestra and the realistic dynamic range of the reproduction.

Ormandy's rendition of this old staple of the concert hall is a carefully calculated one; it suggests lengthy preparation and no end of solicitude in performance. I am particularly impressed with his treatment of the famous Largo (slow movement); the sentiment is projected with a true manly tenderness, and there is an admirable feeling for fine phrasing. Ormandy does not indulge in the eccentricities of Stokowski, though in matters of retards and expressive enhancement he often has some ideas of his own which not all listeners admit conform with a composer's intentions. Here, fortunately, there is less of this than in some other works the conductor has recorded. Of previous sets issued of this symphony, the two made by Stokowski, one with the Philadelphia Orchestra (Victor 273) and the other with the All-American Youth Orchestra (Columbia 416), undoubtedly enjoyed the most sales. Of these, the latter was curiously the better. Of all the sets made by Stokowski and his youthful orchestras assembled for touring the country, the Dvorak *New World* was his most praiseworthy undertaking. There was an enthusiasm in the playing of those younger musicians in the fast movements which must have delighted many listeners. That Stokowski actually maltreated the slow movement, arbitrarily dragging it out to

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ture Viennese March, Midnight Bells, others. With the Victor Symphony Or-chestra, Donald Voorhees, Conductor. Al-bum M-1044, \$3.00.

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**NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**, Hans Kindler, Conductor: Hungarian Rhapsody No. 6—Liszt. 11-9154, \$1.00.

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great length and indulging in some over-lush effects, does not seem to have concerned most people I know who own this set.

I never took to the Iturbi performance; with all its excitement there was a certain nervous tension alien to the composer. My favorite performance of this work has been and still is the one made by George Szell and the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra (Victor set 663), which dates back to before the war. Ormandy tends to be somewhat ponderous where Szell reveals a more cogent dramatic strength. Perhaps Szell is more sober in his interpretation, but I have never known any true musician to call his stodgy. Where Iturbi is jolting in his handling of the syncopated rhythms, Szell is smoother. But in matters of rhythmic emphasis I think Ormandy shows discretion and sympathetic understanding. His reading might be said to fall between Szell's and Stokowski's; it is closer however to the former. Those who can satisfactorily reproduce modern symphonic recording (there seem to be quite a few who have complaints on this score) and who like, nay prefer, the wider range of dynamics in the new sets will undoubtedly want this album. It goes without saying that those who hear the orchestra play this work in its tour will also be swayed toward it.

—P.H.R.

KHRENNIKOV: *Symphony No. 1, Op. 4.*  
DISC set 753.

▲ In our review of this work last month we regarded it on the strength of the sponsor's labelling and notes as a performance of the complete symphony. However, it turns out that what is recorded is only the last movement. Since the movement is a tri-partite one, it is understandable how we and others were willing to accept it as the complete symphony. Actually, there are two other movements: a first very much in the vein of Shostakovich and a slow one that recalls Rachmaninoff. Undoubtedly the best of the symphony is the last movement, and that is perhaps the reason why the Russians did not record the others. It is a movement which we find stands firmly on its own feet and can be enjoyed for itself. It is a pity that the Disc concern was not more careful in its labelling and certainly the writer of the notes should have been more competent. —P.H.R.

LISZT (arr. Kindler): *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 6*; played by the National Symphony Orchestra, direction of Hans Kindler. Victor disc 11-9154, price \$1.00.

▲ Liszt's *Sixth Hungarian Rhapsody* does not lend itself as well to orchestral transcription as his *Second*. Even the latter fares better on the piano. There is an old recording of the *Sixth* by the late Mischa Levitzki which is not only a worthwhile memento of his artistry but also a lesson in artistic accuracy. Mr. Kindler has entirely different ideas about this composition; he makes us more conscious of its various sections and does not begin to hold it together as Levitzki did at the keyboard. There is little in Kindler's performance that could be called submissive to or compliant with the composer's intentions; the transcription could be marked Kindler after Liszt. As orchestral transcriptions go, this one is capably contrived; Kindler knows his orchestra and knows how to obtain effects. He has created a somewhat lush tonal canvas, on which his often erratic rhythmic beat and over-indulgence in rubato do not always seem fitting. But such things are a matter of personal taste.

The recording has not the reproductive brightness of some recent orchestral discs but, as orchestral recording goes, it is good.

—P.H.R.

▲  
STRAUSS FAMILY: *Polkas—Tik Tak Polka* from *Die Fledermaus* (Johann, Jr.), *Sans Souci—Polka* (Johann, Sr.), *Pizzicato Polka* (Johann, Jr. and Josef), *Leichtes Blut—Schnell Polka* (Johann, Jr.), *Annen Polka* (Johann, Jr., arr. B. Homola), *Bahn Frei—Polka* (Eduard, arr. Peter Bodge); played by the Boston "Pops" Orchestra, direction Arthur Fiedler. Victor set M-1049, three 10-inch discs, price \$9.99.

▲ Society adopted the polka, favorite national dance of Bohemia, in 1835 at Prague. From Prague it soon spread to Vienna and Paris. It took the public by storm and its popularity spread to England and America. So great was its vogue that "everything was named after the polka, from public houses to





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articles of dress". At one time, the *Times* of London complained that correspondence from France was not of any consequence since the polka had replaced politics at Paris.

There are few conductors who play these gay pieces as well as Mr. Fiedler; his bright incisive style and considerate attention to dynamics give them a sparkling life and buoyance which is all to the good. The polka has long been displaced by other dances in public favor and there are probably very few people among us today who even know how to dance it. As musical entertainment, these pieces are light-weight and more enjoyable as fillers than as a series. The bristling *Pizzicato Polka* by Johann, Jr. (the great waltz king) and his brother, Josef, has long been a great favorite, and the *Tik Tak* from *The Bat* is, of course, widely familiar. Some people will be unfamiliar with the other polkas, although not a few of them have been long available in European recordings. They all make for pleasant listening even though not on an equal plane.

The recording is in the realistic pattern of the Boston "Pope" discs. —P.H.R.



**TCHAIKOVSKY:** *None But the Lonely Heart*, Op. 6, No. 6; *The Sleeping Beauty—Waltz*, Op. 66, No. 6; *Andante cantabile* from *Quartet in D major*, Op. 11; *Mélodie in E flat major*, Op. 42, No. 3; *Barcarolle* from *The Months*, Op. 37a; *Waltz of the Flowers* from *The Nutcracker Suite*, Op. 71a; played by the Robin Hood Dell Orchestra of Philadelphia, conducted by André Kostelanetz. Columbia set M-601, three discs, price \$4.00.

▲ This choice of material and its arrangement are obviously planned for a commercial release. Kostelanetz knows how to dish out the sentiment, and apparently his admirers know how to eat it up. Basically a good musician, he knows his orchestra, but he more often than not seems content to exploit superficial values. While the present set might not be said to do Tchaikovsky a disservice, I hardly think it, or anything like it, does the composer any real good. The playing of the Robin Hood Dell Orchestra is no more than satisfactory. The recording is excellent.

—P.G.

## Concerto

**BRAHMS:** *Concerto in D major, Opus 77*; played by Joseph Szigeti (violin) and the Philadelphia Orchestra, direction of Eugene Ormandy (9 sides), and **BRAHMS:** *Adagio* from *Sonata in D minor, Opus 108*; played by Joseph Szigeti (violin) and Leonid Hambro (piano) (1 side). Columbia set M or MM-603, five discs, price \$5.50.

▲ Here is a set that should make record history. The recording does justice to the occasion. There are a fine approximation of dynamic range and infinite tonal subtleties not evidenced in Szigeti's earlier performance. Some people persist in believing that many orchestral recordings of a decade and a half ago are preferable to modern ones. It is curious how many listeners are insensitive to tonal gradations and to the thrill of a true crescendo passage which in old recordings just never came off.

Szigeti made his first recording of this work with the late Sir Hamilton Harty and the Hallé Orchestra in England in 1929. At the time the violinist was in his middle thirties. Seventeen years in the career of an artist of Szigeti's stature could hardly fail to reveal a maturity of artistic perception. This is apparent with the playing of the first side of the new set. Not only is his tone freer but there is a deceptive ease to his technique. When his first set was issued I remember one English critic remarking that since Szigeti was twenty years younger than Kreisler it followed almost inevitably that he could not interpret a work like the Brahms concerto in quite "so masterly a manner". I have never concurred with that statement. Even at that time, Szigeti was, in his own way, as proficient as Kreisler. The latter, with all his reflective benevolence, was never technically as impeccable as Szigeti. There was a youthful verve in Szigeti's earlier performance which Kreisler's more matured conception did not admit. The admirable skill and strength in his earlier performance of the long and exacting opening movement is retained in the new recording. But there is also a quality of inner assurance now. One may not be fully aware of Szigeti's artistic maturity, for there is that sense of art con-

cealing art within his playing. His is the creative type of playing which inspires the listener to a creative type of listening. His forceful intellect is always apparent, but not striving to drive the music back on its own heart, as one reviewer said of his earlier playing. Today, one feels that Szigeti's intellect is mated to emotion in a more cogent manner.

One can enthuse over a performance of a work like this by almost any great artist. Looking back at my review of the Heifetz-Koussevitzky set, I find it brought forth considerable praise. However, through the years it has proved less enduring than I thought at first it would be. I have found myself returning again and again to the old Szigeti-Harty set, despite its poorer recording. Szigeti has always played the gay finale better than anyone else; its gypsy energy must appeal to him, and though he rightfully professes no nationalism in style, one cannot help but feel that his Hungarian birth stands him in good stead here.

It is in the slow movement that those who are taken in by mere tonal eloquence find others preferable to Szigeti. But here I find a wonderful sense of detachment in Szigeti's artistry. There is a "rarified nobility" in his playing, as one musician friend of mine says. His tone is crystal clear, poetic yet quite unsentimental. There is an elevation of style that seems ever to be bringing the melodic line forth afresh, phrase by phrase. The orchestral introduction of this movement in the new recording lacks the fluency and subtlety of the violinist's playing. As admirable as the solo oboist is, he plays at a too consistent dynamic level.

On the whole, the orchestral performance is a competent one. Ormandy directs expressively and with strength of purpose, although I do not think there is always the fluidity of melodic line in his orchestral direction that is found in Szigeti's playing.

The encore exhibits a more intimate phase of the violinist's art, but seems inappropriate here. I would have preferred the last side blank. This same excerpt was used as a filler in Szigeti's older set, but it is anticlimatic as an encore. Moreover, Szigeti has already given us a complete performance of the *D minor Sonata*, with Egon Petri at the piano, which I feel can be neither duplicated nor replaced.

—P.H.R.

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## Keyboard

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BACH: *Organ Music* *Fugue in G Minor* ("Little" *G Minor*); *Chorale and Chorale Prelude—Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott*; *Fugue in C Major* ("Fanfare" *Fugue*); *Sheep May Safely Graze* (*Cantata 208*) (arr. Biggs); *Passacaglia and Fugue in C Minor*; played by E. Power Biggs on the organ in the Memorial Church of Harvard University. Victor set M- or DM-1048, four discs, price \$4.85.

▲ Mr. Biggs has had the privilege and the distinction of playing all of Bach's organ works on the air, and gradually he seems to be building up a fairly comprehensive recorded repertoire of the works of this master. For this album he has used the organ of the Harvard Memorial Church rather than the Baroque instrument in the Germanic Museum with which so many of his recordings have been made. The present instrument is larger and more elaborate, though also designed by Harrison and built by Aeolian-Skinner, but the Biggs conception and approach remain the same. The sound is a good one, and the reproduction is well up to the standard set by Victor in the older recordings of this artist.

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The new program contains two of the most famous of the organ works, the prelude on perhaps the greatest of Luther's chorales, one inexplicably unfamiliar fugue and the organist's own transcription of a favorite aria. The artist is nothing if not consistent in his characteristics and mannerisms, and perhaps any criticism of his playing may as well be general. That he is a serious artist and a master of his instrument is too well known to require comment; that he lacks the perfect rhythmic steadiness which might set him in the very first rank of interpretive musicians is also a familiar comment. This lack has the rather curious effect of making his playing seem to gain momentum as the piece in hand progresses, so that at the end one is surprised to realize that the artist is not actually two or three times as fast as at the beginning. Indeed, wherever the music gets more involved Mr. Biggs (unlike most of us) seems to be that much more in a hurry. I remember a criticism a friend of mine once made of another performance of a Bach work—"They don't play it," he said, "as though they were as convinced as I am that this is the most beautiful piece of music in the world." I thought of this as I listened to Mr. Biggs in the lovely *Schafe können sicher weiden*, which, however, sounds its best only when sung by a clear soprano voice with the double flute obbligato. And in the great *Ein' feste Burg* (he precedes the chorale prelude with the chorale itself) I could wish for a really four-square rhythm. Comparing this latter and the great *Passacaglia* with the pre-war Musicraft recordings of Carl Weinrich, I find the latter far more precise and clear in detail (in his climaxes Biggs' tone is inclined to blur—owing no doubt to the acoustics of the church), though some will undoubtedly prefer the warmer tone of the Harvard organist.

—P.L.M.

▲  
GIGOUT: *Toccata in B minor*; and CAMPRA (arr. Fox): *Rigaudon*; played by Virgil Fox (organ). Victor 10-inch disc 10-1208, price 75c.

▲ Mr. Fox is a virtuoso organist and both of these compositions are good display pieces. Eugène Gigout (1844-1925) was a famous French organist, a favorite pupil of Nieder-

meyer. He replaced Saint-Saëns at the Madeleine on the latter's death. Gigout composed extensively, and his scholarly organ works have long been used in churches. The present *Toccata* is in the classical tradition.

André Campra (1660-1744), of French birth, was best known as an opera composer in his time. The present piece, based on a familiar French dance form, suggests operatic origin; it is pompous and showy.

Mr. Fox is not what I would term a subtle organist; his style of playing is straightforward and somewhat ponderous. The recording is realistic, with a most effective crescendo in the *Toccata*; but unfortunately one does not get a clear idea of the music's lines, since the overlapping tonal resonances in *forte* passages submerge the inner passage work. The organ Mr. Fox uses is not named on the record, but if memory serves us right he made records in the past on the organ at Girard College in Philadelphia. —P.G.



LISZT: *Sonata quasi fantasia (Après une lecture de Dante)*; *Concert Etude in F minor (La Leggerezza)*; *Funérailles*; *Liebestraum No. 3 in A flat*; *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 15 (Rakoczy March)*; played by Gyorgy Sandor (piano). Columbia set M or MM-602, four discs, price \$4.85.

▲ It is a strange fact that failure to achieve everything asked by the composer may sometimes be to his advantage. I admired Sandor's playing of the Rachmaninoff concerto last month not because it rendered up to the composer all that was due him, but because the pianist avoided obvious exploitation of some of Rachmaninoff's less enduring characteristics. There is in Sandor's playing an earnestness of purpose, a technical precision and a clarity of line. His tone in loud passages tends to crispness, it even becomes steely at times. In soft passages he often reveals a sensitivity that is particularly gratifying. But he lacks the ability to vary his playing with tonal coloring. There will be pages and pages which are too persistently black and white. It can be said that Liszt's often tawdry sentiment can be exploited to great disadvantage to his music. But Liszt re-

quires an interpretative intensity which is not altogether a technical show.

This brings me to consideration of the first item in the set—the *Sonata quasi fantasia*, after Dante. In this work Liszt has given no specific program, as he did in his *Dante Symphony*. Constant Lambert has arranged this composition for piano and orchestra and recorded it with Louis Kentner at the keyboard (English Columbia discs DX-967/68). Lambert's score served as the basis for a ballet at the Sadler's Wells in London. Kentner's playing was far more vividly contrived than Sandor's, and the latter does not begin to realize the coloring of the chromatic theme material (on side 2) as Kentner does. To be sure, the orchestra adds much by way of coloring that the piano alone cannot give. This being a first recording of the original work, it should be welcomed on that score.

In the *Etude in F minor*, one of Liszt's finest compositions, there is both virtuoso sweep and poetry. This music should flow like a brook which in no way gives us an impression of surmounting obstacles. The fluidity of execution begins at the first bar and carries through until the end. Under Sandor's fingers this music does not begin to get the requisite flow until the halfway point. Some of his passage work is momentarily thrilling but the sensitivity of the music is not revealed as satisfactorily as its virtuoso aspects are. *Funérailles* is a miniature tone poem, intended to convey a picture of funeral processions. The contrast here could have been more varied, but I must admit Sandor does some beautiful pianissimo playing which has been most realistically recorded. Sandor's version of the ubiquitous *Liebestraum* is played with true sensitivity and discretion. The *Hungarian Rhapsody* is a vehicle for true bravura and this is a quality that Sandor possesses, but surely there is room for more tonal coloring in the Liszt *Hungarian Rhapsodies* than we find here.

I have already intimated that the recording possesses an admirable degree of actuality. However, some of the percussive points of the playing may not be easily reproduced through all pickups. —P.H.R.

**A TWO-PIANO RECITAL—SCHUMANN:** *Andante and Variations, Op. 46;*

**CHOPIN:** *Rondo in C, Op. 73;* Mendelssohn: *Allegro Brillant;* played by Pierre Luboshutz and Genia Nemenoff (duo pianists). Victor album M or DM-1047, four discs, price \$4.85.

▲ Recordings of all three works were needed, since the most recent release, the Schumann, dates from 1942. Apparently the Mendelssohn is a first recording: I can find no prior one. It is in the composer's characteristic vein of sprightliness, reminiscent of the scherzo from his *Midsummer Night's Dream* music, and has enough sparkle to fill a jewelry display window. How much of that sparkle is the real thing and how much is plating, the listener will have to determine. Myself, I think it will tarnish.

On the other hand, the Schumann variations are the essence of the best in romanticism. No silver-plating there; the rich harmonies and almost impressionistic treatment of the theme add up to a singularly moving composition. Chopin's *Rondo* does not rank with it in maturity, although it deserves more respect than many writers have given it. Although it is an early work, the embroidery is deftly sewn on, and there seldom is a dull moment. It is especially interesting as an early specimen of Chopin-esque embellishment, where the runs and technical work not only surround the theme

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but cannot be dissociated from it. Here, one feels, the writing is occasionally frankly virtuosic; later such virtuosity was to be subordinated to the musical demands.

This recording posed several problems for me. With the highs wide open it shattered badly. Cutting out the highs removed the shatter, but the quality was not as clear. (The editor informs me he did not encounter this trouble, but we mention it so that an interested reader can make some arrangement to hear the set on his own equipment before buying.) The older recordings of the Schumann and the Chopin works, both by Bartlett and Robertson, had a high degree of surface noise, a condition that prevails in the present set but not as markedly. Thus, from the recording standpoint, there is little choice. Bartlett and Robertson, while not recorded with as wide a range, nevertheless emerge with admirable quality.

Interpretatively, a choice is easier to make. Bartlett and Robertson tinkle along prettily, in a drawing-room style, but with little emotional impact. Luboshutz and Nemenoff have greater sweep, more abandon, and a more varied tonal palette. The difference in recording quality does not preclude my preferring this set, and the fact that it contains all three selections under one cover is for me the clincher. —H.C.S.

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### Instrumental

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**FRITZ KREISLER PROGRAM:** *The Old Refrain, Miniature Viennese March, Rondino on a Theme by Beethoven, Midnight Bells* (Heuberger-Kreisler), *Londonderry Air* (arr. Kreisler), *Hungarian Rondo* (Haydn-Kreisler); played by Fritz Kreisler (violin) with Victor Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Donald Voorhees. Victor set M-1044, three 10-inch discs, price \$3.00.

▲“A musician's hobby is his art,” says Kreisler. “In this he is blessed.” At seventy-one, despite his recent accident, Kreisler continues to play his violin. “I would brave punishment to play,” he states, “just as some men brave punishment for their

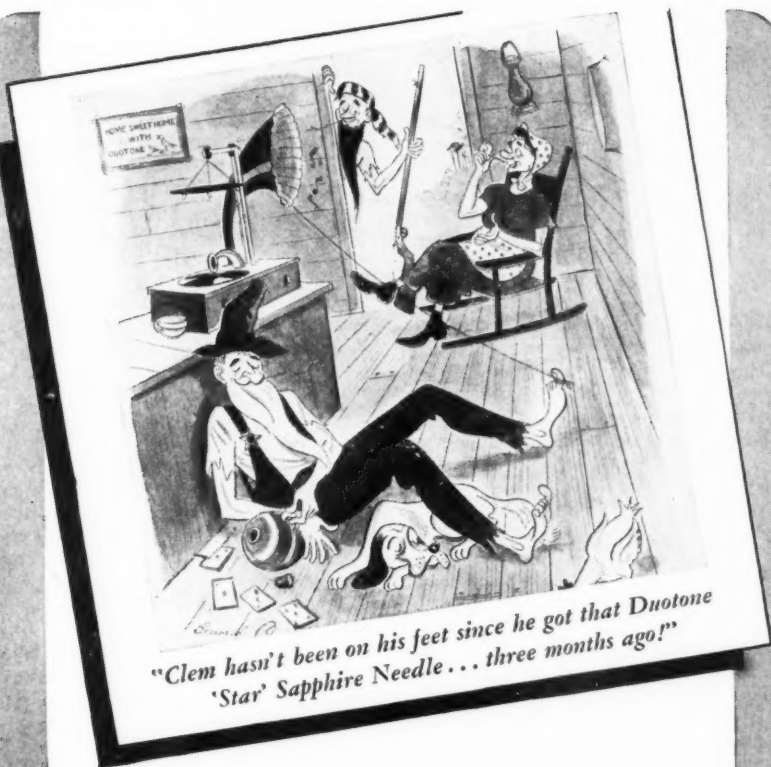
religion.” One admires his fortitude and his faith in his art. For over a half-century he has made music all over the world and known the gratitude of many peoples. If there is not all of the old magic of his playing in these records, there is still much to admire: his avoidance of over-sentimentalism, his stylistic grace and his unmistakable enthusiasm for his art. All of these compositions or arrangements are his own, and many of them have become endeared to the hearts of countless listeners and a part of the repertoire of countless violinists. For my own part, Kreisler's older recordings of some of these pieces hold more magic for me than these new ones, in which an inappropriate orchestration and a rather characterless direction is apparent. There is not quite the tonal suavity nor is the same assurance evidenced here, but some of the old reflective tenderness in his playing still prevails, and this is a quality that cannot help but appeal to those who acquire this album. The recording is excellently realized. —P.H.R.



**SCHUBERT:** *The Litany*; and **BACH:** *Come, Sweet Death*; played by William Primrose (viola) with Vernon de Tar at the organ. Victor disc 11-9117, price \$1.00.

▲Mr. Primrose has chosen to play on his viola two great and genuinely beautiful songs. His performances are appreciable for artistic dignity and expression and an extraordinarily appealing tonal quality. His use of contrasting strings in the separate verses lends variety. One could hardly call these performances transcribed ones; actually, except for a few double stops at the end, Mr. Primrose employs his viola as a substitute for a singer. At the beginning of the Schubert Litany for All Soul's Day, the dark, rich tone of Mr. Primrose's viola sounds like a contralto singer. I would have preferred these performances with a piano accompaniment; somehow the organ tends to be a bit lugubricus. However, Mr. de Tar plays simply and tastefully. The recording is realistic with a full share of organ accompaniment. —P.H.R.





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## Voice

BACH: *Cantata no. 78—Jesus, Thou My Wearied Spirit (Jesu der du meine Seele)*; sung by the Bach Choir of Bethlehem with Lucius Metz, tenor, Mack Harrell, baritone, and orchestra, direction of Ifor Jones. Victor set M- or DM-1045, four discs, price \$4.85.

▲ With this issue the famous Bethlehem Bach Choir makes its record debut. Thus becomes generally available another of our national institutions, previously known at first hand only by those who made the pilgrimage to the Pennsylvania town where the annual festivals are held, or who heard the few performances the choir has given elsewhere.

The cantata chosen to introduce the choir is a particularly attractive one. Opening with a solemn *chaconne* built on the same motive as is the great *Crucifixus* in the *B Minor Mass*, it includes also the famous soprano and alto duet (here, as frequently elsewhere, sung by the female section of the chorus) *Wir eilen mit schwachen doch emsigen Schritten*, in which the idea of hastening to the Lord for help is graphically represented by a rising "step" motive. (Collectors will remember a charming Columbia disc of this duet made by the Rheinhardt Choir of Zurich, in which the boyish voices and the sound of the cembalo gave a certain pleasing effect which is missing here.) There are also a recitative and aria for tenor and one for bass, and the final chorale—the idea of which, of course, has furnished the motive for the cantata.

The Bethlehem performance is in the time-honored tradition of bigness and impressiveness which for some may seem to outstrip Bach's intentions. Accepted on its own terms, however, it is in every way an excellent presentation of the cantata. Some will feel that the use of the piano for the harpsichord part is unfortunate. Again there will be some who regret the use of the English translation, which is Bethlehem's own. There seems to be less reason for singing in English on records, which the hearer can repeat at will, than in a performance which must be taken in at a single sitting.

For when you are going to live with a work, authenticity becomes increasingly important. However, in a recording of the Bethlehem Choir certainly we could hardly expect a re-studied text. The soloists are both well-known in this kind of singing, and both give characteristic accounts of themselves. Mr. Metz is inclined to be a bit indeterminate in his intonation, but Mr. Harrell is the soul of musical neatness. As to diction both are excellent. A word should be added in praise of the unnamed orchestral soloists. The recording is in general very good, although the chorus is reproduced with less clarity than the solo singers and the orchestra. There was some surface crackle in the review copies.

—P.L.M.



BIZET: *Carmen—Excerpts*; sung by Risë Stevens (mezzo-soprano), Raoul Jobin (tenor), Nadine Connor (soprano), Robert Weede (baritone), with the Metropolitan Opera Chorus and Orchestra, direction of George Sebastian. Columbia set M or MM-607, five discs, price \$5.50.

▲ The emphasis here is on Risë Stevens, and indirectly on the Metropolitan Opera House. The selections in this album are as follows:

- Prelude* (1 side)
- Habanera* (1 side)
- Seguidilla* (1 side)
- Gypsy Song* (1 side)
- Toreador Song* (1 side)
- Flower Song* (1 side)
- Card Song* (1 side)
- Micaela's Air* (1 side)
- Final Duet* (2 sides)

Miss Stevens does her best singing in the *Habanera* and the *Seguidilla*. It is particularly satisfying in the latter selection to have her joined by Don José and to hear the scene sung as Bizet intended it to be. In the *Gypsy Song*, Miss Stevens is less successful, and her rendition of the *Card Scene* lacks the true fatalistic quality. In the Final Duet, she shows a complete misunderstanding of Carmen. Here there is too much emotional agonizing; Carmen was a fatalist who accepted the idea of death in an undespairing manner. In my estimation, there is a little bit too much of Hollywood suggested in this last scene.

Mr. Jobin, a French Canadian by birth, is a good but not outstanding Don José. He sings well, but the voice lacks requisite appeal. His rendition of the *Flower Song* has not the expressive feeling to make it a remembered moment in the sequence of things, and nowhere does he convey the passionate intensity of the character. He is earnest, straightforward and artistically dependable, but, listening to Mr. Jobin, one does not think of Mérimée's Don José as a man "utterly depraved by his passion for Carmen".

Robert Weede does a competent job on the *Toreador's Song*, but he does not get under the skin of the character; there is much more dramatic subtlety to this aria than he conveys. Miss Connor's rendition of *Micaela's Air* is vocally on the fluttery side; she has sung much better in the opera house.

The Metropolitan Opera Orchestra shows up much better under Mr. Sebastian's alert and live direction than we have previously heard it on records, but the Metropolitan Chorus confirms the impression I have long had at the opera, that it is a definitely second-rate organization.

By and large, this is Miss Stevens' show and undoubtedly many of her admirers will be gratified that she has given them her personalized renditions of the high spots of Carmen's music. But some of us will remember and turn to other recordings of most of the material here for more satisfying performances.

The recording is satisfactorily accomplished throughout and in no way disturbs one's absorption in the work of the singers and the orchestra. —P.G.



DVORAK: *Songs My Mother Taught Me* (*Když mne stará matka*) (no. 4 of *Gypsy Songs*, Op. 55); and SMETANA: *The Kiss* (*Hubicka*)—*Cradle Song*; sung by Jarmila Novotna, soprano, with Victor Orchestra, direction of Frieder Weissmann; violin solo in the Dvorak by Joseph Fuchs. Victor disc 11-9153, price \$1.00.

▲ It is certainly no new observation that a singer is more than likely to sound his best when singing in his native language. This

has not infrequently been true of Russian artists, and the best of our Scandinavian vocalists have demonstrated it time and again. Indeed most of us, when away from home, can become eloquent on the subject of the things we have left and hope to go back to; but for the musician there is the added urge to show to all what fine things have been given to the world by his countrymen. Whether or not we may give the credit to this missionary zeal, I am sure I have never heard Miss Novotna sound so well as she does on this record. Hers is, at its best, an appealing voice, but it is often an unruly one, and her vocalism has not always kept pace with her excellent musical intentions. However that may be, those who come to this recording expecting to take the will for the deed are in for a most pleasurable disappointment.

As a group, Dvorak's *Gypsy Songs* belong among the neglected things in music, but *Songs My Mother Taught Me* has been sung by anyone and everyone for lo these many years. It may indeed be that the reputation of the cycle has been impaired by the over-familiarity and the frequently unfortunate performances of the one member. However, it takes only singing like this to remind us how the well-known nostalgia of this song can take effect again. Novotna sings it

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cleanly in the original language and leaves the sentiment which is in the music and in the sound of her voice to carry the message. One might wish that it had not been decided to stretch the song to twelve-inch size by the introduction of the violin solo repetition, but this again is an old familiar device. It is not overdone and the orchestra is not ineffective. In any case I like the moving tempo.

The *Cradle Song* from Smetana's opera *Hubicka* has the additional merit of not having been worn by frequent repetition. Emmy Destinn, of whom Novotna is said to have been a protégée, made one of her most appealing records with it in pre-electric days, and Elisabeth Schumann did it for us charmingly but in German as a part of her first *Lieder-Recital*. Miss Novotna, singing like Destinn in Czech, has made a record which in authenticity as well as in sheer beauty of performance can take its place beside that of her great predecessor.

On both sides the recording is effective, and it has the kind of spaciousness which I have missed in some recent vocal discs.

—P.L.M.

EDWARDS: *Into the Night*; and LEVITZKI: *Do You Remember*; sung by Ezio Pinza (basso), with Gibner King at the piano. Columbia 10-inch disc 17378-D, price 75c.

▲ Nice going, Mr. Pinza, is what we are prompted to say. Here are two conventional drawing-room songs which are sung with unusual artistry; note how the singer marks the rhythm and carefully enunciates his words. Mr. Pinza's diction shows remarkably little trace of his Italian ancestry. There are not a few memories of Pinza as Don Giovanni in these renditions; both are love songs, and though he is not maudlin in his interpretations, he does not at the same time forget to inject them with a convincing sentiment. Those who admire such songs will probably be most gratified, and I can imagine a few feminine hearts being momentarily stirred. Mr. Pinza's persuasive and almost insinuating *mezzo voce* in Levitzki's song has had its effect on listeners elsewhere. Incidentally, this song was one of the lesser products of a great pianist who died unfortunately too soon.

Mr. King's accompaniments are discreetly played, and the recording is good. —P.G.

RODGERS: *Carousel—Soliloquy*; sung by James Melton, tenor, with Victor Orchestra, direction of David Broekman. Victor disc, 11-9916, price \$1.00.

▲ This sample of the popular *Carousel*, the musical transformation of Molnar's *Liliom*, affords a demonstration of one possible direction for opera in English. Against an orchestral background in the semi-popular style of our time the tenor meditates in a kind of *arioso*, with occasional bursts of straight lyricism. More specifically, a prospective father plans the future of his boy, only to realize quite suddenly that he might, after all, find himself with a daughter! The musical-dramatic plan has been skillfully carried out, but one wonders at the end just how much of this sort of thing the public would be willing to take to its heart. So far I have not caught myself singing or whistling the tunes, nor do I have the impression of having witnessed an important piece of drama. This may be partly the fault of the singer, whose diction, however, is crystal clear and who has certainly a full and complete grasp of the situation in hand as well as the necessary technique. Perhaps it is his very clarity which produces the essential mildness of the results. What a great vocal actor or a *diseur* might have done with the material I can only conjecture. However, for those who want to revive their memories of *Carousel*, this well-made record will undoubtedly bring pleasure, as it will to admirers of Mr. Melton's pleasant tenor voice.

—P.L.M.

ROMBERG: *The Desert Song—The Desert Song, One Flower Grows Alone in your Garden, One Alone, and The Riff Song*; sung by Dennis Morgan (tenor) with chorus and orchestra, conducted by Edgar Roemheid. Columbia set X-260, two 10-inch discs, price \$2.00.

▲ Those who admired Mr. Morgan, and thought his voice adequate, in the modern-

ized film version of *The Desert Song*, which Warner Bros. released, will be drawn to this album. As a singer, apart from the screen, he does not have too much to offer; the voice is hardly a distinguished one. As an actor, Mr. Morgan has a certain self-assurance and a youthful conviction that stand him in good stead. His acting qualities are not included in his singing. I suspect his voice is "built up" by microphone technique in both the pictures and these records. I would advise those interested in this set to hear it before purchasing. —P.G.



**RUSSIAN FOLKSONG:** *Kaleenka*; **BORODIN:** *Galitzky's Air* (from *Prince Igor*) (arr. M. Fiveisky); sung by the General Platoff Don Cossack Chorus, direction of Kostrukoff; solos by S. Slepoushkin (bass-baritone). Victor disc 11-9118, price \$1.00.

▲ There is rarely much to add to what has so often been said about a Russian male chorus. The quality of the voices, the depth of the basses and a certain rather ponderous precision are more or less typical of the best of choirs. It is therefore fairly safe to assume that if this kind of singing appeals to you, you will like almost any record of it which may appear. This latest disc maintains the general standard.

*Kaleenka*, or *Snowball Tree*, is a perennial with Russian singers. It is done here in the characteristic manner with a solo bass-baritone whose voice suggests Chaliapin without, of course, challenging comparison. The *Prince Igor* number was a favorite with that great artist, and his record of it is still a good one. Here we have the music so arranged that the chorus supplants the orchestra, but the honors remain with the soloist. Mr. Slepoushkin carries them off creditably enough. All rather tricked up, yet again a good performance in the accepted tradition of Russian choirs. The recording is good. —P.L.M.

—P.L.M.

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**TCHAIKOVSKY:** *Eugene Onegin—Introduction and Duet from Act I*; sung by E. Kurglikova (soprano) and E. Antonova (alto) (1 side); *Eugene Onegin—Trio from Act II, Scene 1*; sung by E. Antonova (alto), S. Kozlovsky (tenor), and P. M. Nortsov (baritone) (1 side); *Eugene Onegin—Scene and Aria of Onegin, Act III, Scene 1*; sung by E. Kurglikova (soprano), P. M. Nortsov (baritone), and M. Mikhailov (bass) (1 side); *Queen of Spades—Yeletsy's Aria from Act II, Scene 2*; sung by Shara-Talian (baritone) (1 side); *Iolanthe—Iolanthe's Aria, Scene 1*; sung by Zhurkovskaya (soprano) (1 side); *Iolanthe—King Rene's Aria, Scene 4*; sung by Pirogov (bass) (1 side). All with Bolshoi Theatre Orchestra. Disc set 752, three discs, price \$7.50.

▲ The reproduction here is quite clean, but the recording is of the studio type and favors the voices too much. In some cases, I feel the singers have been placed too close to the

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microphone for the good of the general ensemble.

On the whole, the singers are satisfactory, but most of these Russian voices tend to be strident and shrill on occasion. The best singing is by Pirogov in the bass aria from *Iolanthe*. Shara-Talian has an appealing baritone voice, but he has a little more vibrato than I like.

The several conductors are not very conscientious ones, for the orchestral playing is lacking in smoothness and precision. The excerpts from *Eugene Onegin* will undoubtedly be welcome to admirers of this opera, one of Tchaikovsky's best. Some of the scenes are incorrectly labelled, but we have corrected this in our introduction above. The Introduction to Act I is poorly played but the song of Tatiana and Olga is well sung. The Trio from Act II, Sc. 1 (not Sc. 2) begins where Lenski accosts Olga after the latter stops dancing with Onegin. Olga upbraids him for being stupidly jealous and the scene ends with Onegin asking who he is and Olga's reply.

The Trio from Act III, Sc. 1 (not Sc. 2) begins where Gremin introduces Tatiana to Onegin. As Gremin and Tatiana pass on, Onegin sings his aria in which he tells us of his love for Tatiana.

The aria from *The Queen of Spades* is sung by Prince Yelitsky when he tells his love to

Lisa, who is cold to his attentions.

*Iolanthe* has never been a successful opera: it was first given on the same evening as the premiere of *The Nut-Cracker Ballet* and subsequently soundly panned by the critics. Hearing these two arias, I would say they are representative of Tchaikovsky in a persuasive vein. For this reason, it is unfortunate that the soprano here is not as gifted vocally as the bass. An older recording of *Iolanthe's Aria*, sung by D. T. Sprishevskaya (Victor disc 4098—withdrawn), was far better sung and hence more enjoyable.

The present pressings on vinylite, I would imagine, make for smoother reproduction than did the original Russian shellac pressings. —P.G.

## False High Fidelity

(Continued from page 252)

400 and the 1000 being fed to it, and the 600 and the 1400 will be of a much lower volume or level than the 400 and the 1000. This represents intermodulation distortion.

Let us try to explain this more simply. Intermodulation distortion occurs when a piece of reproducing equipment is unable to reproduce simultaneously extremely low loud tones with weaker high frequency sounds. All recording and reproducing components tend to have a certain amount of this type of distortion. To confuse the issue more, trouble does not stop there, but is cumulative. This results in a jumbled mass of tones that have no bearing musically on the two original tones. However, since harmonic distortion has a definite relationship to its source—musical instruments get their individuality by their own harmonics—a few extra harmonics of low intensity may actually enrich the quality of an instrument. This is however another story. But with intermodulation distortion the same is not true. The latter, if present, shows up especially in the high frequencies; it gives a reproducing system a cutting, piercing quality which is annoying in the extreme.

On the above premises, one would reason that distortion and all the idiosyncrasies of an amplifying system or reproducing unit should be cleared up before any attempt is

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made to extend the frequency response, but unfortunately the practice seems to be first to extend the frequency response indiscriminately and then worry about such matters as distortion. One of the most important sources of intermodulation distortion is from output matching transformers. A leading manufacturer of high quality equipment has shown how the quality of an amplifier could be made or broken by the quality of an output transformer. For true high fidelity results, the design and construction of the transformer must be held to very high standards, thus keeping intermodulation distortion at a minimum. All of which is an argument in favor of a well built and thoroughly tested high fidelity reproducing unit, but such equipment must of necessity cost more than ordinary equipment, and the listener who wants the best in the field must be prepared to pay for it.

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### Personal Preferences

(Continued from page 255)

zenith. I suggest this disc whenever someone says, "But I do not like vocal records". When the participants sing so divinely, most people are not averse to admitting that vocal records can be enjoyed. A fine disc, dating from 1929.

Gluck: *Orphée et Eurydice*—*J'ai perdu mon Eurydice* and *Objet de mon amour* (sung in German); Margarete Klose (contralto) with Berlin State Opera Orchestra, conducted by Bruno Seidler-Winkler. English H.M.V. disc DB-4531.

Margarete Klose, in my estimation, possesses the sovereign contralto voice of our time. Hers is a rare combination of vocal beauty, tonal control, and artistic integrity. The arias she sings from *Orpheus* are classic gems of French opera, requiring the most exacting degree of expressive understanding. You will seek in vain for any trace of pitch uncertainties or that wobble which so often spoils contralto recordings. This disc (dating from 1936) brings us a rare contralto opulence and a true majesty of interpretive art. The orchestral background is full and rich.

Traditional: *Oft In the Silly Night*; Maggie Teyte (soprano) with Gerald Moore

(piano). English H.M.V. DA-1804.

Finally, in a quiet and reflective interval, at the end of day, this song seems most appropriate. There is *nothing* that could be improved upon in this wartime British recording of 1942. Maggie Teyte sang this song to the English Tommies and to our GI's, and they applauded her heartily. But the mood she creates does not ask for applause, it almost suggests a fitting prelude for sleep.

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## Book Review

(Continued from page 276)

Song" and that when the tune is played three times "sleep is almost inevitable." Music is useful as an invasion weapon, Dr. Podolsky points out, for the Nazi army disembarked some twenty thousand troops during the conquest of Oslo to the tune of a German song. "The Osloans failed to realize their capitol was being conquered." All of which gives one food for thought. But Dr. Podolsky contends that, as with any other medicine, one can have enough even of music. This may be why we find the last chapter devoted to the influence of color on man and the only mention of music made is that the two most sensory impressions are those of sight and sound. The author has provided for himself with what we colloquially call "an out."

—Benjamin West

## Some Recent Jazz

Tommy Dorsey's *If I Had a Wishing Ring* (Victor) has a very smooth introduction with Tommy gliding gracefully into the record. Stuart Foster sings the vocal following the initial mood of Tommy's trombone. The complete arrangement is handled in the usual Dorsey professional style. The reverse side also features Tommy with Foster on the vocal. I would say these two recordings belong to the boys and girls that have that Ol' Spring Feeling.

Of three new records Duke Ellington has made for Victor, the one featuring *What Am I Here For*, is the best. It is one of Ellington's own compositions. For originality, one looks to the Duke! I mentioned in a previous review that the Duke's followers must be looking his way after Woody's recent *Your Father's Mustache*. But maybe with the Duke it's such a usual thing, his invention, that we sometimes take him for granted. For a man like Ellington, it's invention and not sensationalism. On the reverse of *What Am I Here For* is *I Don't Mind* sung by Ivie Anderson, backed with typical Ellington orchestration. *I Aint Got Nothin' But the Blues* (the second of the three

records) seems to me a very good commercial side with an interesting obbligato by Kay Davis; the vocal refrain is by Al Hibbler. Its reverse face contains a vocal by Joya Sherrill of *I Didn't Know about You*. The least interesting of the Duke's three latest is the disc containing *My Little Brown Book* and *Someone*.

More mention should be made of that man with the horn of "Gabriel". I refer to Mister Henry "Red" Allen the *Mop-Mop* man. He has just brewed *The Crawl* for Victor. Where the title comes from I couldn't guess. Perhaps it stems from the last few bars of the piece where he captures some mood of a crawl. Although this is another one of Henry at his best, there is some annoyance at the beginning where he "quacks" as he did on the *Mop-Mop* record: once was all right but twice is too many. J. C. Higgenbottom on his trombone does some fine playing on this recording. On the reverse side "Red" fails with *Drinky Heart*.

In the vocal department we have Martha Steward on a Victor label of *Day by Day*. Here the lady sings from her heart, holding the beat throughout the recording in her usual style. She makes some wonderful changes in this selection. On the reverse face we have *Tomorrow Is Forever* from the International picture of the same name.

*The Blues in the Red*, on a Musicraft disc, featuring Clyde Bernhardt with Leonard Feather's Blue Six, offers simple lyrics of the blues type, compelling and with a sincere feeling. There is a folksong quality about this selection and its companion, *Scandal-Monger Mama*, coming mostly from Bernhardt's rendition.

For a good novelty, Capitol has just waxed Colonna—or rather they have waxed his voice, which has nothing to do with his mustache—in a new release of *Casey* (The Pride of Them All) from the Walt Disney picture *Make Mine Music*. On the reverse side "The Mustache" yells *Josephine Please No Lean on the Bell*.

—Low Glane

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